

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

Ohio State Engineer

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THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

OF HUMAN BONDAGE by W. Somerset Maugham
—*Modern Library*—95c.

THEY CAME LIKE SWALLOWS by William Maxwell
—*Harpers*—\$2.00.

Human Bondage

Within the last three weeks, for probably the fifth time, no doubt, I have re-read Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, this time, of course, for class room use. And, for as many times as I have read it, I still found it the same absorbing story as I did the first time some twenty years ago. *Human Bondage* has had a remarkable career. Undoubtedly written directly from the author's experiences, it was immediately hailed as a great novel, and since then it enjoys the reputation as the best seller on college campuses throughout the country. Book sellers have told me that they cannot keep enough of them in stock.

I can well understand why, for Philip, the main character, forms an amazingly interesting study. The untimely death of his mother and father, his drab and narrow life in the Barnstable vicarage with his Aunt Louisa and Uncle William, his early training at a church school, his apprenticeship as a clerk in London, his first wide-eyed glimpse of the world in Germany, as well as his art studies in Paris, all form entertaining background as well as explanations for his actions with Mildred during his subsequent medical studies in London.

Maugham's characters are real, they live, they breathe, they suffer, they enjoy life. Hayward, Clutton, Flanagan and Lawson are real flesh and blood people, who are ready to sit down at a sidewalk cafe and discuss Manet's *Olympia*, and the Renoirs and the Degas and the Pizarros. Miss Price's struggle and suicide cut deeply; Miss Wilkinson's foibles amuse highly; Cronshaw's philosophy stimulates effectively; and Mildred's downward career offers endless opportunity for mental groping and verbal discussion.

I wish it were possible for every student before he leaves college to read Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. That alone is an education in itself; but that plus a year on an American college campus will send forth a student with a clearer and wider vision than he had when he entered as a lowly freshman. Vive le Maugham!

Civil War in Spain

When Ralph Bates, the noted young English novelist, was on the campus the middle of November

I was interested in what he had to say concerning the young soldier members of the Loyalist Army fighting on the Spanish front outside the city of Madrid. He claimed that these untutored soldiers, most of them uneducated, were writing amazingly fine bits of poetry, flashes that came directly from the heart through their experience. The novelist stressed the point that the temper of the poetry was not from the viewpoint of the defeatist, like that contained in the World War Poetry of Rupert Brooke and Alan Seeger and Winifred M. Letts. Quite to the contrary, it is poetry of hope and victory and glorious conquest. Does this have any bearing, I wonder, on the ultimate outcome of the Spanish Civil War? Does it mean that the Loyalists in time shall be victorious?

Mr. Bates is the author of a number of novels, among them, *The Olive Field* and *Rainbow Fish*, both drawn against the background of Spain where he has lived and written for the past eleven years. He left Madrid in October for his lecture tour in America.

"... Like Swallows"

Rather reluctantly one evening last summer I started to read a book that a friend brought me, thinking I would be interested in it. It was *They Came Like Swallows* by a new author of whom I had never heard, one William Maxwell of Lincoln, Illinois. Despite my misgivings, only ten pages of the first chapter revealed to me that it was fascinating reading; and as I read on and on I discovered that page after page brought fresh delight. I finished the book as the sky was lighting with morning sun.

They Came Like Swallows is the story of the James Morison family, seen first through the eyes of the youngest son Bunny, and continued through the eyes of his brother Robert and finally of their father. The crushing blow to the family comes with the death of Mrs. Morison from an attack of the flu in December, 1918, at her parents' home where she had gone to give birth to a third child. The father's return to his motherless home and the final disposition of his two sons form a breathless climax to a beautifully tragic story.

They Came Like Swallows is not bright and happy reading; it is sad, pleasingly and satisfyingly sad reading. One sees in it a little corner of life lifted out of reality and put in black and white on the printed page. I think that I liked it because technically, as a novel, it is spun perfectly and with a steady hand.

There are two paragraphs worth quoting, two

paragraphs in the most simple English that could be written, but so powerful in their simplicity that they rise above the heights of ordinary writing.

"When James changed the direction of their walking, it brought them straight toward the coffin. They stepped up to it together, and it was not as James had expected. He was not in the least afraid with Robert beside him. He stood looking down at Elizabeth's hands, which were folded about a bunch of purple violets. He had not known that anything could be so white as they were—and so intensely quiet with the life, with the identifying soul gone out of them.

"'You won't forget your mother, will you, Robert?' he said. And with wonder clinging to him he moved away from the coffin."

Book Suggestions for Christmas Buying

THE RAINS CAME by Louis Bromfield, Harper, \$2.75.

Long, brilliant and tense. A novel of Britishers in India, by Mansfield, Ohio's, own product and the author of *The Farm*. Good reading if you are interested in India.

THE ENEMY GODS by Oliver La Farge, Houghton, \$2.50.

A splendid story of a young Indian of the Navajo country struggling between his native people and the American civilization. You will like this one by the author of *Laughing Boy*.

ONE-MAN SHOW by Tiffany Thayer, Messner, \$2.50.

A widely read author not at his best, but certainly good enough for anyone liking Thayer. All about artists who feel impelled to paint.

IMPERIAL CITY by Elmer Rice, Coward, \$3.00.

A novel of the city by the author of the famous play, *Street Scene*. Fine reading of men and women and their phases of life in a great city, in the worlds of society, of finance, of the theatre and of law.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS by Lloyd C. Douglas, Houghton, \$1.25.

Maybe you know a person who likes this man Douglas and will be delighted to have this little Christmas story of a group of brothers and sisters who come home for the holiday season. If you do, it will make a good present.

AND SO—VICTORIA by Vaughan Wilkins, Macmillan, \$2.50.

Here is a book of love and life, adventure and lust, good enough to be the worthy successor for the man who liked to read *Anthony Adverse*. Not quite as long as *Anthony*, but long enough to learn all about English and Continental goings and comings before Queen Victoria came to the throne. Splendid reading and well recommended.

ISLAND OF BALI by Miguel Covarrubias, Knopf, \$5.00.

If you have a very special friend who travels, or who likes to read travel books, please him by giving this account of the life on Bali. Also, please yourself by buying it in time so that you can read it before you give it away. A fascinating book about the Balinese.

THE CITADEL by A. J. Cronin, Little, Brown, \$2.50.

A splendid story of a doctor's career when the ethical problems of medical existence weigh heavily on the mind of a young college graduate. Great reading and highly recommended.
